

# Media Release

## Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

**Scott Mascher – Sheriff**

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**August 27, 2015**

### ***3 Additional Victims come forward related to Chino Valley Con Man***

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Since the arrest of 36-year-old Benjamin Dever on August 18, 2015, for fraud schemes (see original media release included following this update), 3 additional victims have been identified in separate fraud schemes involving suspect Dever.

***Detectives are still seeking any additional persons who may have been victimized by Dever. Please contact Detective Ross Diskin at 928-777-7389.***

The additional details provided in these cases are presented as a reminder to others to carefully step through any real estate/contract relationship and act upon suspicious that may develop during such transactions.

**Victim No. 2** - On August 19, 2015, a victim contacted detectives and reported the loss of \$5100 from a scam involving suspect Dever. Detectives learned Dever was sent to inspect a Chino Valley home on Parama Lane in late July of this year and take photos for proposed remodeling work on behalf of a contractor. Instead, Dever represented himself as the contractor to the homeowner and quoted a cost estimate of \$5137 for the work. Dever indicated there would be a cash discount if the homeowner paid in full up front. The victim noted that Dever mentioned his daughter had cancer and the insurance was

not covering the treatment. By July 29<sup>th</sup>, the homeowner had written Dever \$5137 in checks for work not yet started.

Detectives learned that during this time Dever convinced the actual contractor not to take the remodel job. On August 19, 2015, the homeowner called the contractor to find out when the remodel would begin as he had already paid for the job. The contractor was not aware of any payment and told the homeowner Dever had taken his money under false pretense.

Detectives also confirmed with Dever's wife that their daughter does not have cancer.

**Victim No. 3** – On August 19, 2015, detectives were contacted by the Chino Valley Police Department regarding a rental scam involving suspect Dever. A female reported Dever contacted her on an internet dating site using the name "Troy." She told him she was a single mother and was looking for a house to rent. Dever replied that he had a "big heart for single mothers" and offered to help and stated he was in the business of 'flipping houses.' On August 13, 2015, Dever showed her a home on Cactus Wren Drive in Chino Valley. As with the first victim from the Meadow Lane incident (see the original media release for details), Dever had access to the property based on work photographing homes for a property preservation company. Without any legal standing to do so, Dever offered to rent the victim the Cactus Wren Drive house based on a \$740 dollar move in payment. Within 2 days, she had paid Dever \$740. Her kids were excited about the home and had already picked out their bedrooms.

On August 15, 2015, the victim and her family went to the Cactus Wren Drive home intending to move in but upon arrival, noticed some else moving items into the home. She called Dever and he apologized for the mix up which he blamed on the current property owner. Dever then offered to show her a home on Meadow Lane in Prescott with 3 months free rent provided due to the mix up. The victim became suspicious of Dever, called the actual real estate agent for the Meadow Lane home and discovered Dever had scammed her.

**Victim No. 4** – Detectives located another victim from Prescott Valley who explained that in early August of this year, she met Dever on a dating website and eventually in person. When she began dating Dever, he told her about his desire to buy a construction company and asked to borrow cash to help with the purchase. She eventually agreed and turned over \$1400 to help with the initial payment. Dever agreed to give her a 35% stake in the company for the help. No such purchase was ever intended and she now realizes Dever had scammed her.

**\*\*\* *New additional charges include 2 counts of Theft, Fraud Schemes, 2 counts of Burglary, and Attempted Fraud Schemes. Dever remains in-custody on a parole hold and is not eligible for bond.***

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Original release issued August 19, 2015 - Suspect **in Fraudulent Schemes Crime Arrested:**

On August, 18, 2015, 36-year-old Chino Valley resident Benjamin Dever was arrested and booked at the Camp Verde Detention on a charge of Fraudulent Schemes and remains in-custody. Bond has not been set.

Background – Dever has been working for a property preservation service during the past week and was assigned to take pictures of properties to confirm readiness to sell or rent.

Dever had previously inspected a property in the 2800 block of Meadow Lane in Prescott and was in possession of keys to the residence as a result of this employment.

On August 18, 2015, Dever contacted a woman who had placed a Craigslist ad indicating she was looking for a place to rent in the area. Dever explained he had a home on Meadow Lane that he could show her. He also mentioned he was a ‘youth pastor’ and in the business of flipping houses. When the prospective tenant met Dever at the Meadow Lane home, he told her he would need a money order in the amount of \$1050 to secure the rental. Dever suggested she hurry because many others were interested in renting the house. The woman eventually left without making any commitment or payment.

A short time later, Dever called the woman and told her he would throw in a washer and dryer if she would rent the place. The woman thought this was suspicious and decided to contact the real estate agent listed on a sign posted in the front yard. The agent told the victim she did not know Dever and indicated the likelihood this was a scam situation. The woman then called YCSO and also told Dever law enforcement had been contacted.

Deputies met with Dever at the Meadow Lane home along with the victim and the involved real estate agent. Dever told deputies there was a misunderstanding and he would have never taken any money from the victim. He did admit to representing himself as the property owner and simply guessing a dollar amount for rent. He offered that any money received would have been turned over to his employer and he hoping his effort would lead to more work as a property photographer.

The victim reiterated to deputies that it was Dever who expected her to turn over any money directly to him. She stated he never mentioned his employer or the real estate company in the discussion.

Dever is currently on parole for fraud and theft. Detectives confirmed he has no youth pastor affiliations. Dever is under investigation for another fraud scheme in the area.

The victim was smart and maintained a buyer beware state of mind while acting on her suspicions without hesitation. This type of scam, also known as ‘property hijacking,’ has been around for a while and many times associated with Craigslist ads.

***YCSO is requesting that anyone else who had contact with Dever related to similar fraud activity contact Detective Ross Diskin at 928-777-7389.***

*Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:*

[www.ycsoaz.gov](http://www.ycsoaz.gov)